

Public Safety and Policing



Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission

**Modernization of Recruitment Standards and Practices of Law
Enforcement Agencies to Increase Diversity**

Guidelines

Public Safety and Policing
Maryland House Bill – 1016
3-207 (a) (20)

Police Training and Standards Commission

Modernize Recruitment Standards

The Commission has the following powers and duties:

To evaluate and modernize recruitment standards and practices of law enforcement agencies, to increase diversity within those law enforcement agencies, and develop strategies for recruiting women and African American, Hispanic or Latino and, other minority candidates. (Public Safety §3-207 (A)(20)).

Purpose and Scope:

When members of the public see a law enforcement agency that is diverse, they feel that the department represents them, understands them and responds to them when communities perceive authorities as fair, legitimate, and accountable it deepens trust in law enforcement and instills public confidence in government. This trust is essential to defusing tension, solving crimes, and creating a system in which residents view law enforcement as fair and just. Victims and witnesses of crime may not approach or engage with law enforcement if they do not perceive such authorities to be responsive to their experiences and concerns.

Diversity is not only determined by race and gender, but also by religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, language ability, background, and experience. True diversity within an agency serves as a critically important tool in building trust with communities.

(2016 U.S. Department of Justice Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “Advancing Diversity in law Enforcement”).

Benefits to Agency:

Embracing an environment that is supportive of diversity has many benefits for a law enforcement agency. A diverse work force helps agencies to minimize potential litigation and negative publicity. Embracing an environment supportive of diversity increases the number of potential candidates by drawing from a larger labor pool. Agencies with a diverse group of employees typically develop more comprehensive strategies when dealing with enforcement issues in the community and intra-agency administrative matters. Agencies with diversity in their ranks maintain better communications and relations with minority communities resulting in higher case closure rates and improved customer satisfaction.

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1. Streamline Your Recruitment and Selection Process

Law enforcement agencies are often burdened with cumbersome recruitment and selection processes that may frustrate applicants and drive them to seek other employment. Minority applicants often deal with negativity from their own community when it is revealed that they desire to enter the profession of law enforcement. The most effective recruitment and selection processes for minorities are those that are quick and allow a candidate to move swiftly from application to employment decision points. Some agencies have reengineered police selection and recruitment as a one- or two-day event, commonly over a weekend, from first assessment to conditional offer of employment. At the other end of the spectrum, some systems can take a year or more to complete the process.

Common characteristics of weak recruitment processes include systems that were designed to select out, rather than select in a candidate. In effect, the process is designed to find reasons not to offer an applicant a job rather than identify reasons to employ. In the minority community, high crime rates and unemployment are sometimes the norm rather than the exception. This systemic problem may also lead to criminal charges and unpaid bills resulting in low credit ratings for potential minority candidates. An understanding of recruitment and selection is essential if improvements are to be made. Monitoring every applicant at each step in the process is necessary.

Applicant elimination points should be identified and meticulously scrutinized to ensure that exclusion decisions are based on failure to meet essential selection standards. The monitoring begins at the point of initial interest and continues until an applicant completes preservice and field officer training and satisfies requirements to be confirmed as a career status officer. This recognizes that recruitment and selection does not end until an officer has completed his or her probationary employment period satisfactorily.

2. Mentor Applicants Through the Process

In addition to streamlining its application process, a law enforcement agency should establish a personal relationship with applicants from the start. After all, many applicants will become coworkers and eventually leaders of the organization. A welcoming and supportive attitude to minorities and all applicants will pay dividends in the long run. Supporting applicants includes accepting the fact that some may fall short at first, but they should be encouraged to continue involvement. A promising applicant need not always be excluded from employment because of a deficiency that could be overcome with additional preparation. An agency mentor working with such an individual should focus on building on the applicant's strong attributes and fortifying detected weaknesses.

Agencies should consider developing a formal mentoring program that identifies and trains willing and competent mentors from within the ranks. In doing so, agencies should consider racial, ethnic and gender commonalities when pairing mentor with mentee. This formal process should begin at a point-certain in the hiring process and continue throughout the training journey.

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Agencies have successfully implemented mentoring programs at the beginning stages of career development as well as continuously for the career path of willing employees. Evidence suggests mentoring often improves results in employee hiring, promotion and retention.

3. Involve Everyone in Recruitment

A total-agency approach may be the best course of action in problem solving. Preliminary efforts to engage the entire agency in the task of developing a minority recruitment strategy will increase the chances for success. Ensure that your recruitment division is diverse and all recruiters are knowledgeable about your agency and feel comfortable discussing their experiences while employed with the agency. Recruitment efforts should be focused in areas with high minority populations such as historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), women's organizations, and other Latino organizations such as Casa de Maryland. Successful recruitment is more likely when consideration is given to broadening target areas and venues.

4. Enhance Web Outreach for Minority Applicants.

In general, law enforcement agencies have harnessed the power of web-based communications effectively. Home pages are well-done and attract visitors looking for quick information or those desiring to learn more about crime in a particular community. Some law enforcement agencies have done an exceptional job of exploiting the power of the web while others have yet to fully use this tool. Using the web for recruitment can bring much of the global labor pool to an agency's electronic front door.

Sharing information over the web requires a high level of attention to detail. Information must be current, relevant, and consistent with the agency brand. The web allows an agency to easily accommodate a casual visitor interested in law enforcement as well as the serious applicant seeking information, clear guidance, and a path to follow from initial interest to the application and through the selection process. Personnel needs and recruitment goals should be stated clearly, as should applicant standards. If your target area is the minority community, express what you are looking for and advise potential applicants that you are an equal opportunity employer. A user-friendly recruitment and selection process encourages participation.

After visiting a web site, visitors, at a minimum, should know whether an agency is seeking applicants and should understand its recruitment goals, standards and candidate requirements, recruitment and selection processes, wage and benefits package, and basic job rules. They should also have had the opportunity to submit a statement of initial interest online or clearly understand how to make an application.

5. Enlist the Support of the Media

Much of the media are aware of police staffing problems, but generally do not understand their shared responsibility to solve the problem. Police executives should reach out to their media contacts to discuss the nature and scope of the challenges of recruiting police officers especially minority police officers. Little to no diversity on a department can expose executives to media-

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driven criticism that minority officers are not sought after or are disciplined disproportionately in comparison to their non-minority peers. Proactive intervention with the media, such as informing them of your minority recruitment efforts may rectify or blunt such criticism and serve to engage the media in finding workable and affordable solutions.

Media outreach should involve more than the news media. One should consider using public-access television channels, some of which have developed production capacities that equal those of commercial broadcast channels. They can provide an opportunity to go directly before a community to talk about issues such as police diversity. A chief appearing as part of a diverse community panel discussing law enforcement recruitment goals can open the door for full or community engagement. One should also consider using talk radio. This information allows a law enforcement leader to direct his or her message to the entire community or drill down to a specific segment or niche of the population.

It is common for law enforcement executives to meet with reporters regularly. Such meetings provide another opportunity to increase awareness of the recruitment issues and how they affect the agency and the community, and provide another means for soliciting assistance from the community to resolve the problem. In addition to the agency head, other law enforcement personnel who regularly meet with the media should be armed with the agency's talking points regarding minority law enforcement recruitment.

(June 2009, Law Enforcement Recruitment Toolkit COPS/IACP Leadership Project)

In closing, it is essential to that recruitment efforts include a robust local approach. Often overlooked are strong civic and community networks that are available and willing to help law enforcement agencies in many aspects of recruitment through positive community outreach. Agencies should partner with religious institutions and other associations with greater access to people who may not ordinary be aware of standard recruitment efforts. Examples of such outreach include participation in "career forums" and local fairs, or visiting high schools to help promote a positive image of law enforcement in general and the agency in particular. This positive public interaction is fundamental in developing future law enforcement candidates by promoting trust and a positive image of the law enforcement agency.